

Pregnancy Risk Assessment Procedure

As the earliest stages of pregnancy are the most critical ones for the developing child. It is in the employee's interest to inform her Head of Department of her pregnancy as soon as possible.

NOTIFICATION OF PREGNANCY

The Pregnant Employee may choose to inform her Head of Department (HOD) through her Line Manager or by contacting the Health & Safety Office (H&S). She may also choose to have her Doctor directly contact RCSI H&S. When a HOD or Line Manager is formally notified by the employee that she is pregnant, has recently given birth or is breastfeeding, they in turn arrange for a [Pregnancy Risk Assessment](#) to be completed by contacting H&S.

NOTE – HEALTHCARE WORKERS

1. The HSE have advised that **pregnant Health Care Workers (HCWs)** working with or near patients are defined as 'High Risk' or 'Very High Risk' given the increased risk of exposure in healthcare.
2. **Pregnant HCWs, with no other risk factors, should be deemed High Risk** and should work from home if possible.
 - a) Clinical work, care work and working closely with others may be possible where testing of patients and staff, and provision of controls (e.g. screens, PPE) is effective in managing the risk.
 - b) Pregnant HCWs in this category should not work with known or suspected COVID positive patients. If a HCW cannot carry out their substantive duties from home, please contact your line manager and H&S where a risk assessment will be carried out.
3. **HCWs with 'Very High Risk' underlying health conditions** must follow the government guidance for 'extremely medically vulnerable' people. See <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/923825-guidance-on-cocooning-to-protect-people-over-70-years-and-those-extr/>. Very High Risk HCWs must work from home and cannot return to the workplace.
4. **Pregnant HCWs with the following risk factors** may also be defined as 'Very High Risk' and should refer to their line manager and H&S for a risk assessment to be carried out:
 - a) Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background
 - b) Being obese (BMI >30)
 - c) Pre-pregnancy co-morbidity, such as pre-existing diabetes and chronic hypertension
 - d) Maternal age 35 or older
 - e) Adverse social circumstances
5. **Pregnant HCWs with other underlying health conditions or obstetric complications** that could be negatively impacted by COVID 19 infection, may also be considered 'Very High Risk', subject to individual risk assessment by your line manager and H&S, in consultation with the HCW's Obstetrician or other Specialists involved in their care.
6. Please be mindful, that if you are vaccinated, currently this does not remove you from the high risk HCW category. This may change as more research is done.
7. For further information, please visit <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>.

PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT

1. The employee will meet with her HOD / Line Manager to outline the purpose of the risk assessment process.
2. The employee and HOD / Line Manager will assess the risks to the employee, regarding their specific work tasks using the associated Pregnancy Risk Assessment Form. This will determine what the pregnant woman is exposed to, how often the exposure occurs and for what duration. This Assessment will take into account the main risk areas listed in the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007 – Chapter 2, Part 6 and Schedule 8.



3. If a risk is identified, the pregnant employee and HOD / Line Manager will discuss the risks and put in place an action plan to ensure that neither the pregnant woman nor developing child is injured. Particular notes shall be made of any representations made by the woman's GP or obstetrician.
4. In assessing the risk, the employee and HOD / Line Manager will seek to identify if there are any practical ways the risk can be avoided by implementing the following steps:
 - a. Reduce Risk by implementing controls according to the General Principles of Prevention e.g.
 - i. Adjust the Working Conditions and/or Hours of Work to reduce the risk;
 - ii. Provide suitable alternative work to reduce the risk;
 - iii. Having undertaken the risk assessment, where HOD / Line Manager identifies occupational health risks to the Pregnant Employee or her child, which cannot be otherwise reasonably controlled, RCSI will give the employee Health and Safety leave under Section 18 of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994 (until either she ceases to be pregnant, new mother, or breastfeeding, or alternative suitable work has been found).
 - iv. The employee and HOD / Line Manager is to implement the control measures as identified in the Pregnancy Risk Assessment form.
 - v. The employee or HOD / Line Manager will give a copy of the assessment form to the H&S for review.

NOTE: If a pregnant employee is regularly involved in night work for a period of at least 3 hours between 11.00pm and 6.00am, or for 25% of her monthly working time, and has a medical certificate stating that this will damage her health, she must be given alternative work.

CONTROL OF RISKS IDENTIFIED

Once given a copy of the assessment, H&S shall meet with the Pregnant Employee to discuss the control measures and confirm that they are/will be implemented.

Once H&S is happy with the assessment and all control measures are in place, a copy of the pregnancy risk assessment form will be kept securely on file with H&S.

UPDATING AND REVIEW OF RISK ASSESSMENT

If any changes occur, or further concerns are raised, the Pregnant Employee will notify H&S so that the situation can be continuously monitored.

The Risk Assessment shall be reviewed by H&S and if required, updated, following notification from the employee, or where there is a reason to believe it is no longer valid.

The Risk Assessment shall be reviewed by the HOD / Line Manager following the return to work of the Employee who has recently given birth.

RECORD RETENTION

All Pregnancy Risk Assessment forms shall be maintained by H&S for a period of not less than 25 years.

PREGNANT EMPLOYEES USING THE GYMNASIUM

RCSI Gym offers complimentary pre and post-natal exercise advice for all staff members. More information on this can be found on the [staff portal here](#). The more active and fit you are during pregnancy, the easier it will be for you to adapt to your changing shape and weight gain. It will also help you to cope with labour and get back into shape after the birth.

- Don't exhaust yourself. You may need to slow down as your pregnancy progresses or if you're maternity team advises you to.
- If you weren't active before you got pregnant, don't suddenly take up strenuous exercise. If you want to start an aerobic exercise programme, contact the RCSI Gym where there are specifically qualified Pre and Post Natal trainers who can advise you. You do not need to be a member of the gym to avail of this service. The trainer will develop a personalised plan for you and review it with you regularly.
- Don't lie flat on your back, particularly after 16 weeks, because the weight of your bump presses on the main blood vessel bringing blood back to your heart and this can make you feel faint.
- Always warm up before exercising, and cool down afterwards.
- Avoid any strenuous exercise in hot weather.



RCSI

- Do listen to your body and maintain a comfortable workout pace to ensure that you are sustaining a safe body temperature. Also, drink 16 ounces of water every 30 minutes to ensure that you are staying hydrated.

GYM EQUIPMENT SAFE TO USE BY PREGNANT EMPLOYEES

If you are a normally active person, being pregnant should not stop you from being active. There are many activities that are perfectly safe for pregnant women. Pregnant women can continue to do aerobic exercise and strength exercises through their second trimester as long as they are careful.

- **Treadmill** - The treadmill allows you to make many modifications by changing the speed and incline. Even in pregnancy you can add moderate hills. If you are a runner you will know when you need to switch to walking.
- **Elliptical Machine** - This can be a good alternative to the treadmill because it places very little weight on the joints and as your body changes you may be looking for low impact exercises. Some women do experience discomfort from the motion and if you experience pain you should moving immediately.
- **Lat Pull-down Machine** - The weight of your breasts as they grow may cause your shoulders to round forward so this equipment is great to strengthen your shoulder muscles.
- **Seated Chest Press Machine** - This machine will help improve the balance in your upper body by strengthening your pectorals.
- **Leg Curl Machine** - Your legs will need strength to support the weight of your upper body.
- **Seated Leg Extensions** - This machine should be fine for the first two trimesters, but you may have difficulty using it in the last trimester.